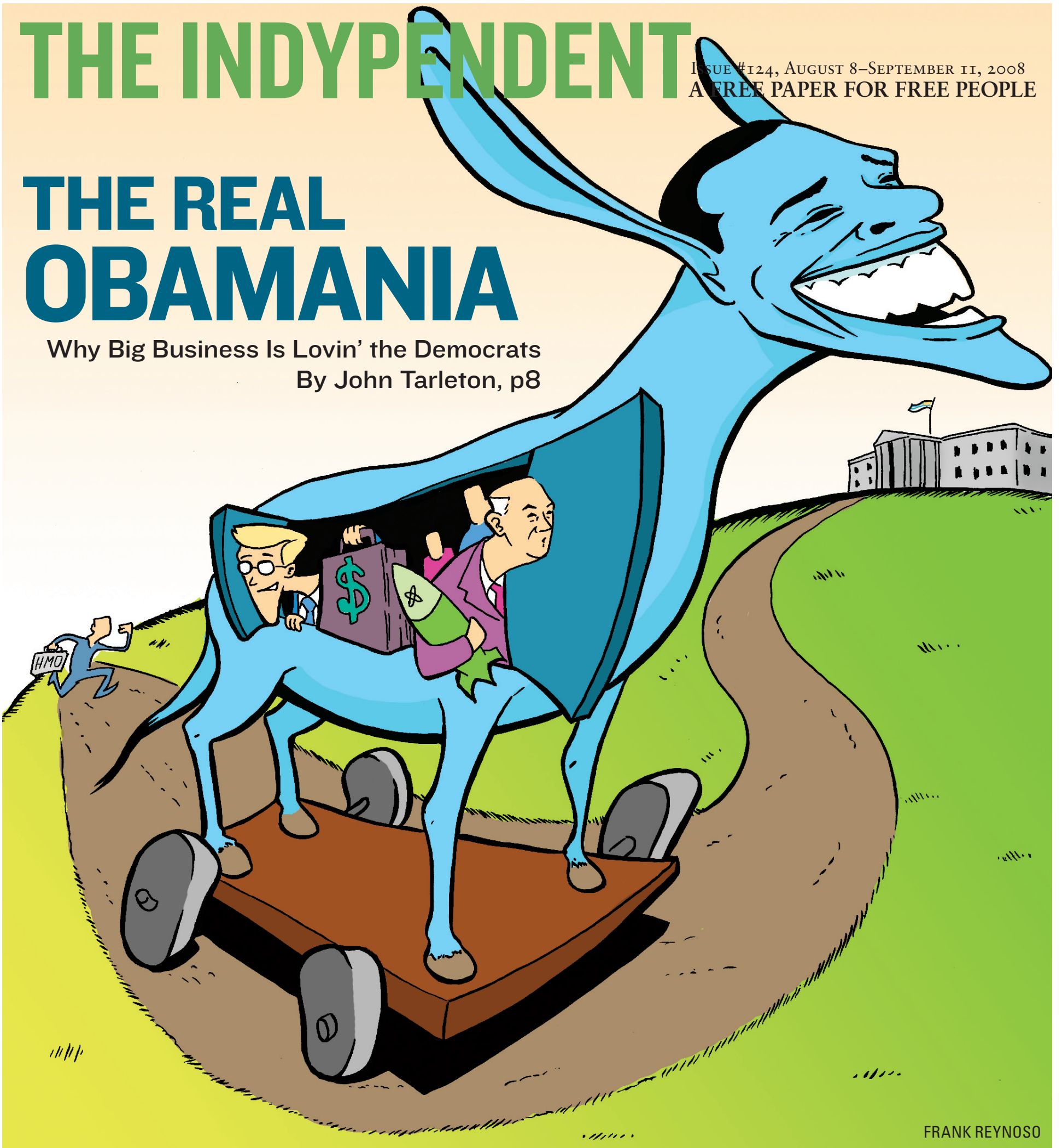


# THE INDYPENDENT

Issue #124, AUGUST 8–SEPTEMBER 11, 2008  
A FREE PAPER FOR FREE PEOPLE

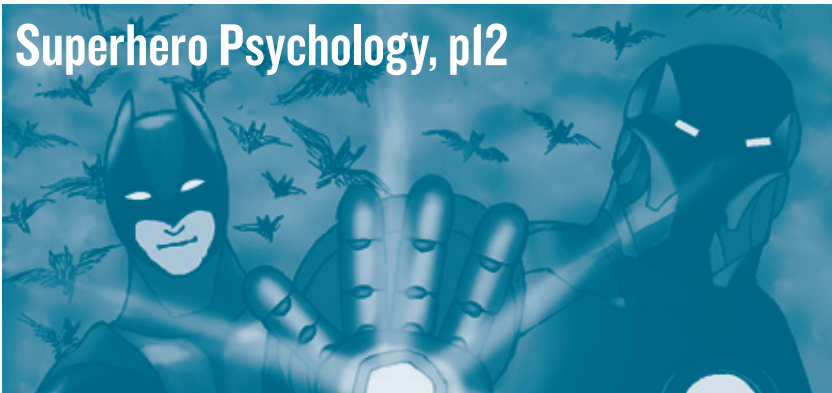
## THE REAL OBAMANIA

Why Big Business Is Lovin' the Democrats  
By John Tarleton, p8



FRANK REYNOSO

Superhero Psychology, p12



Harlem Takedown  
p3



Meet the Macktivist  
p15







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*The Indypendent* is a New York-based free newspaper published 17 times a year on Fridays. Since 2000, more than 600 citizen journalists, artists and media activists have contributed their time and energy to this project. Winner of dozens of New York Independent Press Association awards, *The Indypendent* is dedicated to empowering people to create a true alternative to the corporate press by encouraging citizens to produce their own media. *The Indypendent* is funded by subscriptions, donations, grants, merchandise sales, benefits and advertising from organizations with similar missions. Volunteers write and edit articles, take photographs, do design work and illustrations, help distribute papers, update the website and more! *The Indypendent* reserves the right to edit articles for length, content and clarity.

*The Indypendent* is the newspaper project of the New York City Independent Media Center, which is affiliated with the global Indymedia movement (indymedia.org), an international network that is dedicated to fostering grassroots media production. NYC IMC sponsors three other projects, the children's newspaper *IndyKids*, the IndyVideo news team and the NYC IMC open publishing website (nyc.indymedia.org). NYC IMC relies on volunteer participation and is open to anyone who is interested.

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## community calendar

Please send event announcements to  
indyevents@gmail.com.

The next open editorial meeting for *The Indypendent* is Tuesday, August 12 at 7pm. 4 W. 43rd St, Room 311.  
All are welcome.

#### ONGOING JUN 19-AUG 30

Daily • Sliding scale  
EVENT: HOT! Dixon Place's annual festival of queer culture provides the best of LGBT art in the form of theater, performance art, music, dance and cabaret.  
Dixon Place, 258 Bowery St, 2nd Fl  
212-219-0736 • contact@dixonplace.org  
dixonplace.org/html/hotfest.html

#### SAT AUG 9

1pm-6pm • Free  
EVENT: NAGASAKI DAY ACTIVITIES.  
The NYC War Resisters League will be displaying an exhibit and memorial featuring the history of nuclear weapons.  
Tompkins Sq Pk, 718-768-7306  
nycwrl@att.net

#### SUN AUG 10

10am-3pm • Free  
EVENT: SUNNYSIDE OF THE BLOCK PARTY. Learn how to ride a bike, get active in your community, learn about environmental issues, have your face painted, dance, eat, jump rope or just relax in the shade. All ages welcome.  
46th St, (btwn Skillman Ave & 43rd Ave),  
Qns • sunnysideblockparty@gmail.com  
• blockpartynyc.org or nylcv.org/events/sunnyside\_of\_the\_block\_party\_queens

#### TUE AUG 12

7:30pm • Sliding scale starting at \$6  
FILM & DISCUSSION: NOTHING BUT A MAN. Come view this film about a love between a man and a woman whose bond overcomes racial and class barriers. Discussants TBA.  
Brecht Forum, 451 West St  
212-242-4201 • brechtforum.org

#### WED AUG 13

7pm • Free  
READING: LOVE AND OTHER TECHNOLOGIES: RETROFITTING EROS FOR THE INFORMATON AGE. Join Dominic



**SUN AUG 24** 12pm-7pm • Free  
2ND ANNUAL AFRICAN DAY PARADE. Adam Clayton Powel Jr. Blvd (127th St to 116th St), Harlem  
646-934-7337 or 646-489-5341 • africanadayparade.org

Pettman for a reading and discussion of neo-sexual relationships and how our highly ritualized expressions of desire always reveal an era's attitude toward one's own existence.  
Bluestockings, 172 Allen St  
212-777-6028 • bluestockings.com

#### THU AUG 14

7pm-9pm • Free  
BOOK DISCUSSION: BE A FATHER TO YOUR CHILD. This book is a compilation of essays, interviews and poems written by both popular figures in hip-hop culture and first-time writers, that counterattacks the charge that Black men don't care about their families.  
Barnes & Noble, 106 Court St, Bklyn  
718-246-4996  
info@beafathertoyourchild.com

#### FRI-MON AUG 15-18

CONFERENCE: "POVERTY & UNEMPLOYMENT: THE PERMANENT VIOLENCE OF CAPITALISM." Join the Union for Radical Political Economics for their summer conference which will focus on economic issues, both at home and abroad. Camp Deer Run, Pine Bush, NY  
413-557-0806 • urpe@labornet.org  
urpe.org

#### SAT AUG 16

12pm-6pm • Free  
EVENT: ALP'S 11TH ANNUAL COMMUNITY OUTING & BAR-B-Q. An event for lesbian, gay, bisexual, two-spirit, trans and gender non-conforming people of color and their family and friends.  
Prospect Park Long Meadow, (park area btwn 4th & 6th Sts), Bklyn  
bfenner@alp.org • alp.org/node/182

#### WED AUG 20

6:30pm • Suggested Donation \$10  
BENEFIT & FILM: "SIR! NO SIR!" A benefit film showing for the New York Society for Ethical Culture Public Issues Committee. Cabaret-style showing with a post-film chat. For a \$10 donation, you get two beers and popcorn.  
New York Society for Ethical Culture, 2 W 64th St, Ceremonial Hall, 4th Fl.  
212-874-5210 • nysec.org

#### THU AUG 21

7:30pm • Free  
EVENT: BUILDING AN INDEPENDENT FEMINIST MOVEMENT: Celebrate Women's Rights Day and participate in an open discussion of a resolution for Radical Women's October conference on what it will take to build a feminist movement that is independent of the

twin parties of capitalism and war.  
Freedom Hall, 113 W 128th St  
nycradicalwomen@nyct.net  
radicalwomen.org • 212-222-0633

#### WED SEP 3

7:30pm • Sliding scale starting at \$6  
BOOK RELEASE & DISCUSSION: "A PEOPLE'S HISTORY OF SPORTS IN THE UNITED STATES." Dave Zirin and Robert Lipsyte discuss 250 years of politics, protests, the people and play.  
Brecht Forum, 451 West St  
212-242-4201 • brechtforum.org

#### SAT SEP 6

5pm-8pm • Free  
EVENT: LOWER EAST SIDE ECOLOGY CENTER 10TH ANNUAL CELEBRATION BY THE RIVER. Celebrate the 21st anniversary of making a more sustainable NYC and the center's 10th anniversary in East River Park. Special musical guests, silent auction, raffle prizes, delicious local food and more.  
East River Park Amphitheatre  
caroline@lesecolgycenter.org

NEXT ISSUE: September 12  
Have a great summer break!

## READER COMMENTS

#### MORE THAN AN ECOLOGICAL CONCERN

*Response to "Fighting for the Amazon," July 18:*

Big infrastructure projects like dams are not just issues of local ecological concern. The reason these projects are so aggressively pursued is that they underlie the whole global economy: without these projects, resources cannot be extracted, processed and shipped to the consumption-hungry First World. That means that wealthy, exploitative economies like the United States need these destructive infrastructure projects both overseas and domestically. It also means that if we can prevent them from being built, we can put pressure on the whole system and help to bring it down.

—ROOT FORCE, ROOTFORCE.ORG

#### FREE TRADE IS VIOLENCE

*Response to "Who Will Turn Off the Lights? El Salvador's Youth Exodus," July 18:*

Thank you *Indypendent* for giving El Salvador attention, but this article does a poor

job of informing readers on how violent 2008 has been for youth and organizers. On June 26, student activist Ángel Martínez Cerón, coordinator of the January 24 Revolutionary Socialist Student Bloc, was murdered on the streets of the city of Santa Ana, shot nine times. Although the murder remains unsolved, he and his brother were



harassed and arrested by the police days before. To stand as allies in NYC, we must know more than the facts and figures that Free Trade Agreements generate or we risk seeing heroes like Ángel as mere numbers.

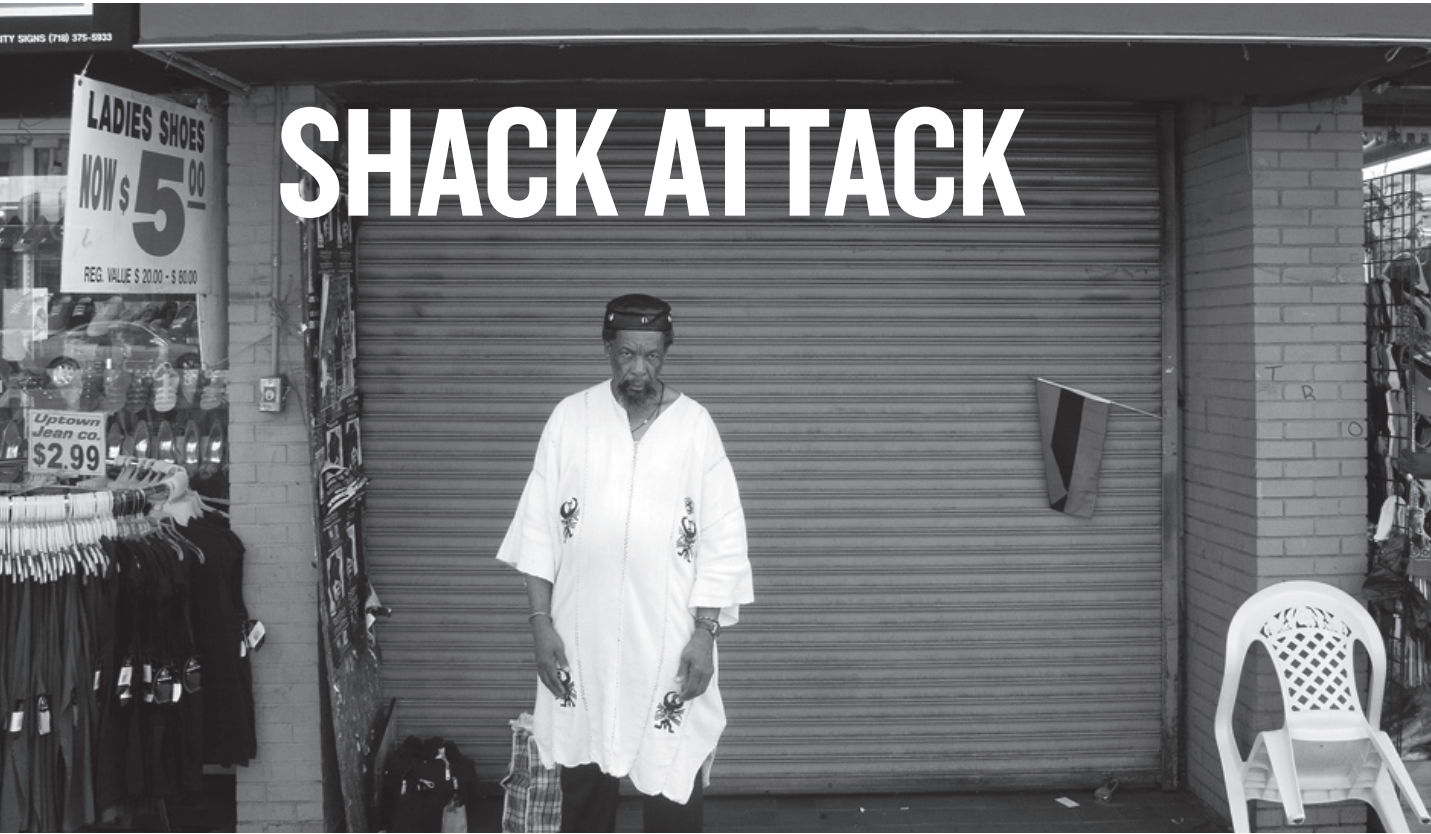
—MAX GARCÍA

#### NATIVE LAND NOT AN ENERGY QUICK FIX

*Response to "Walking for the Earth," July 18:* Now that energy resources are "drying" up, the U.S. government is looking for another quick fix. They don't care how dangerous it is or what it's after effects are, just as long as they can replace one pollutant with another. The other issue is they now want the land given to the Native peoples because the useless land that was originally given to them was actually rich in many fuels. Again, they want to move the Native peoples to other "useless" land that has been ravaged by white people. Everywhere the white man goes, he has destroyed the gifts that our Creator has given to us.

—JUDY ARMSTRONG





**HARLEM UNDER SIEGE:** Sikhulu Shange, owner of the Record Shack at 274 W. 125th St., stands outside his former storefront after being evicted on July 24. The Record Shack was the last black-owned music store in Harlem. PHOTO: MAURICIO QUINTERO

By RENEE FELTZ

Record Shack speakers that once played African music onto the sidewalk across from the Apollo Theater in Harlem are now stored in a Yonkers warehouse. “It’s a terrible feeling inside,” said Record Shack owner Sikhulu Shange. Shange has fought his eviction since February when his landlord, The United House of Prayer, refused to renew his lease. During this same time he helped lead protests against Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s rezoning plan for 125th Street. The City Council approved the plan in March. Since then, real estate values along Harlem’s main business corridor have dramatically increased and long-time tenants like Shange are being forced out. On July 24, Shange returned to his storefront at 274 W. 125th Street, less than an hour after a Manhattan Housing Court judge upheld the eviction order for the business he operated for 41 years. “The city marshal was right behind me and told me to close the store,” Shange said.

“Then the landlord’s brokers said, ‘we have a truck arranged to move your stuff.’” Within about two hours, Shange said his records, CDs and cassette tapes of oldies, contemporary hits, gospel, jazz, and music from Africa and the Caribbean islands were packed up by a fleet of workers who took no inventory of the property he estimates is worth \$200,000. “They told me to take whatever personal stuff I have and leave,” Shange said. The Record Shack was the last black-owned music store in Harlem. “People came to the Record Shack to feel the ambiance of the Harlem community,” Shange said. “All that is going to be jeopardized.” More than a business, his store was a cultural outlet, a tourist attraction and an anchor when the world-famous community went through hard times. “The battle now is to get the goods back,” Shange said. He said the brokers hired by the United House of Prayer want him to pay \$12,000

for the moving and storage of the store’s inventory. He estimates moving it back to Manhattan could cost as much as \$3,000. If he does not retrieve it within 30 days of his eviction, he said the items could be put up for auction. The weekend after the eviction, Shange joined nearly 20 members of the Coalition to Save Harlem in front of what used to be the Record Shack and passed out fliers calling for support of the store. Many passers-by stopped to ask what had happened, and said they opposed the landlord’s decision. The coalition is planning a town hall meeting, but no date has been set. Shange also met with Council member Charles Barron (D-Brooklyn) and reached out to State Senator Bill Perkins (D-Manhattan), but said nothing has been worked out to help him retrieve his property. His landlord refuses to comment on plans for the storefront. The awning that once displayed the Record Shack’s name is now painted over. “It is an onslaught,” Shange said. “They feel they have the upper hand.”

# Rookie Cop Slams Cyclist, Lies

By RENEE FELTZ

The video shot by a tourist as the Manhattan Critical Mass bike ride made its way through Times Square July 25 shows cheering onlookers gasp as New York Police Department officer Patrick Pogan lunges toward cyclist Christopher Long and shoves him off of his bike. “The video that you saw is a very clear video,” said fellow cyclist Judy in an interview with Houston Indymedia. “But, it’s really nothing surprising because that kind of violence has been documented before in Times Square and other parts of the city on the [bicycle] ride.” Just one week after the video was purchased from the tourist and posted to YouTube July 27 by New York City-based environmental group Time’s Up!, it has been viewed online 1.3 million times and received more than 4,500 comments. These comments continue a dialogue that

has been ongoing in New York City since protests against the Republican National Convention in August 2004, when police attacked a Critical Mass ride of thousands of people and arrested hundreds of cyclists. “Ever since then, the reaction of police to the ride has been over the top,” Judy said. In 2006, the city continued to crack down on cyclists by requiring a permit for rides with more than 50 people. “Unfortunately the July 25, 2008, incident is part of a pattern of targeting Critical Mass bike riders,” said civil rights attorney, Norman Siegel in a July 29 Times Up! press release. “Mayor Bloomberg and Police Commissioner Kelly need to provide the necessary leadership to confront and resolve this issue.” The Critical Mass bike rides bring attention to an increasing number of bicycle commuters in New York City. But even as the city’s Department of Transportation makes changes to accommodate them, police behavior towards cyclists remains the same.

“We’re seeing a lot more bike lanes and infrastructure, but the police have been slow to recognize this change,” said Bill DiPaola, executive director of Time’s Up!. The video of Pogan shoving Long may force the city to take disciplinary action at least this one incident. NYPD has placed Pogan on modified assignment while he is investigated for possible misconduct. It is unclear yet if it will drop Long’s charges of attempted assault of an officer, resisting arrest and disorderly conduct. Critical Mass rides on the last Friday of every month from the northeastern corner of Union Square, and is part of a global movement to celebrate and promote bicycle riding. The next ride is Aug. 29.

For more information on Time’s Up!, visit [times-up.org](http://times-up.org). To watch the video, search for “Critical Mass Bicyclist Assaulted by NYPD” at [YouTube.com](http://YouTube.com). Hear the full interview with Judy and Bill, visit [tinyurl.com/5z2tw4](http://tinyurl.com/5z2tw4)

## AMATEUR VIDEO PUTS POLICE PERJURY IN FOCUS

By ANN SCHNEIDER

Officer Patrick Pogan must have wanted to show off to his colleague at the July 25 Critical Mass bike ride when he strode over and body-slammed Christopher Long off his bicycle. It was a little Friday night fun of the kind only enjoyed by New York’s Finest. Long was then arrested and charged with assaulting an officer, resisting arrest and disorderly conduct before being released after 26 hours in jail. In his sworn criminal court complaint, Officer Pogan claimed that Long deliberately attacked him with his bike. When the videotape shot by a tourist who happened to be standing on 7th Avenue, between 46th and 47th streets, went viral on YouTube, it not only raised questions about the honesty of one 22-year-old rookie cop, but also of the entire culture of dishonesty that pervades the New York Police Department.

Prosecutors work so closely on a day-to-day basis with the NYPD that they rarely expose officers whom they suspect to be lying; they just help them tailor their testimony. Hundreds of thousands of cases of police perjury occur every year in the United States, according to Harvard University law professor Alan Dershowitz, who calls the problem “pervasive.” A 1994 report by the Mollen Commission (headed by New York State Supreme Court Justice Milton Mollen) noted the same pattern of police “testifying” in New York — encouraged by police commanders and prosecutors, and condoned by judges. In the mid-1990s, former NYPD Commissioner Howard Safir established a policy that an officer caught lying could be fired. But according to the Aug. 2 *New York Times*, of the 31 police officers formally accused of making false statements to the Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB) between 2003 and 2006, 25 of them were still on duty as of January. It was not known what became of the other six. None of the 31 dishonest cops have been referred to a criminal court, as they are not required to testify under oath at the CCRB. While Christopher Long is likely to see his charges dropped in the coming weeks, it’s important to remember that the NYPD primarily targets Black and Latino communities whose members generally do not have the resources or activist networks to draw on that cyclists who participate in Critical Mass do.

Officer Pogan’s flagrantly false claims also raise new doubts about the testimony of killer cops who have been exonerated in the killings of Sean Bell, Timothy Stansbury, Khiel Coppin, Ousmane Zango, Amadou Diallo and countless other unarmed people of color. For now, Officer Pogan has been taken off the streets and placed on desk duty. The City should fire him immediately. And if Manhattan District Attorney Robert Morgenthau wants to go further in cleansing a culture of police dishonesty, he can start by bringing Officer Pogan to trial on felony perjury charges. That’s the kind of crime-fighting zeal we need to see a lot more of.



July 2006 Critical Mass in New York City. PHOTO: SETH HOLLADAY





### ONLINE THIS ISSUE:

Dozens of members of the Venceremos Brigade defied the U.S. travel ban to Cuba for the 39th straight year and journeyed to the island nation for two weeks in July to work and live alongside the Cuban people. To find out more about the “brigadistas” experiences and what happened when they returned to the United States, read the full article by Doug Smith at [indypendent.org](http://indypendent.org). PHOTO: GEO CONTRERAS

## WHERE DO I GET MY COPY OF THE INDYPENDENT ?

### BELOW 14<sup>TH</sup> ST.

**Grand St. Settlement**  
Pitt & Rivington

**Bluestockings**  
172 Allen St.

**Housing Works**  
126 Crosby St.

**ABC No Rio**  
156 Rivington St.

**Mercer St. Books**  
206 Mercer St.

**Jefferson Market Branch Library**  
Sixth Ave. & 9th St.

**Kim’s Video**  
6 St. Mark’s Place

**Brecht Forum**  
451 West St.

**4th Street Food Co-op**  
58 E. 4th St

**Theater for the New City**  
155 First Ave.

### 14<sup>TH</sup> TO 96<sup>TH</sup> ST.

**Manhattan Neighborhood Network**  
537 W. 59th St.

**Housing Conservation Coordinators**  
777 Tenth Ave.

**Domus**  
413 W. 44th St.

**Muhlenberg Branch Library**  
209 W. 23rd St.

### ABOVE 96<sup>TH</sup> ST.

**Kim’s Video**  
114th St. & Bdway

**George Bruce Library**  
518 W. 125th St.

**Countee Cullen Library**  
104 W. 136th St.

**Julia de Burgos Cultural Center**  
106th St. & Lexington

**Uptown Sister’s Books**  
156 St. & Amsterdam

### BROOKLYN

**Brooklyn Museum**  
200 Eastern Pkwy

**BAM**  
30 Lafayette Ave.

**Vox Pop**  
1022 Cortelyou Rd.

**Tillie’s of Brooklyn**  
248 DeKalb Ave.

**Tea Lounge**  
Union St. & 7th Ave.  
9th St. & 7th Ave.

**Ozzie’s Coffee Shop**  
249 5th Ave.  
57 7th Ave.

**Verb Café**  
Bedford Ave. & N. 5th St.

**Videology**  
308 Bedford Ave.

**Pillow Café**  
505 Myrtle Ave.

**Sisters Community Hardware**  
900 Fulton St.

**Pacific St. Library**  
25 Fourth Ave.

**Clear Spin Laundromat**  
192 Myrtle Ave.

**123 Infoshop**  
123 Tompkins St.

**East New York Food Co-op**  
419 New Lots Ave.

**Weeksville Heritage Center**  
1698 Bergen St.

### QUEENS

**Terraza Café**  
40-19 Glean St., Elmhurst

**Café Aubergine**  
49-22 Skillman Ave.  
Flushing

### BRONX

**The Point**  
940 Garrison Ave.

**Brook Park**  
141st St. & Brook Ave.

**Mothers on the Move**  
928 Intervale St.

**South Bronx Food Co-op**  
Melrose Ave. & 157th St.

### STATEN ISLAND

**St. George Library**  
5 Central Ave.

**Port Richmond Branch Library**  
75 Bennett St.

**Everything Goes Book Café**  
208 Bay St.

### JERSEY CITY

**The Heights Branch Library**  
14 Zariskie St.

### HOBOKEN

**The Spa Restaurant**  
74 Hudson St.

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# Budget Cuts Hits Tenants

By Andrew Lyubarsky

With a multi-colored dragon tattoo emblazoned on his left arm, housing organizer Matt Wade calmly stepped atop a crumpled milk crate and hollered to all those assembled in front of the Goddard Riverside Community Center, an Upper West Side high rise on July 20: “New York needs housing, bring it back, put your workers back on staff.”

He was speaking to a crowd of single room occupancy (SRO) tenants, housing advocates and union members who had gathered to support Wade, a housing organizer, and attorney Ryan Napoli. The two were recently laid off by their employer, the West Side SRO Law Project, due to city budget cuts.

The SRO Law Project is part of the Goddard Riverside Community Center, a sprawling social services organization based in New York City. Goddard’s management cut the two positions in response to deep cuts to city-wide legal services providers.

“We are here to both protect the rights of union workers, as well as the tenants they represent. We ask everyone in power to maintain our level of services,” said Yarrow Willman-Cole, a SRO Law Project housing organizer. The employees at SRO Law Project are represented by the National Organization of Legal Service Workers, United Auto Workers Local 2320.

Unfortunately, the city budget cuts may make the Goddard Riverside battle only the first front of a broader struggle to provide needy tenants with legal support. City-wide anti-eviction and SRO legal services will see a 25 percent cut, a loss of \$750,000 of annual resources. The Legal Services for the Working Poor coalition, comprised of four smaller legal services organizations, is taking a 42 percent hit.

The Legal Aid Society and Legal Services New York will suffer cuts of almost 60 percent in city funding, amounting to a loss of more than \$2 million annually. The city ap-

portioned more than \$3.6 million in fiscal year 2008 and only \$1.5 million for the two organizations in fiscal year 2009. Thus far, there have been no layoffs at the Legal Aid Society and Legal Services New York as the two premier unionized criminal and legal services organizations have plugged budget holes with other funding.

While Goddard Riverside management claims that layoffs are a necessary response to the economic downturn and diminished city funding, the union asserting that management has not acted in good economic faith and opened its books to justify the layoffs. In particular, there is contention surrounding Goddard Riverside’s \$10.7 million endowment as of fiscal year 2006, a small portion of which could be used to retain their frontline staff.

“Without the support of the West Side SRO Law Project, we wouldn’t have even known where to start fighting our landlord,” said West Side tenant Vivian Riffelmacher. Riffelmacher told of how the new management of her building began operating an illegal hotel business out of her building in 2004, and praised the support of the SRO Law Project in helping her tenant association successfully litigate the matter.

West Side SRO Law Project management was unavailable for comment.

Perhaps the most impassioned speech came from Deepa Varma, a SRO Law Project staff attorney, who listed the types of cases the organization has had to turn away in the first week in August because of the layoffs. She mentioned a tenant with a degenerative brain disease who lost her job and was in the hospital when her eviction case went to court, increasing the likelihood she will lose her case because she did not have legal representation. In another case, she described a tenant who got kicked out of his home of 10 years when it was illegally converted to a hotel.

“Without the layoffs, we could have taken all these cases and won,” claimed Varma. “Now, we can do nothing to help.”



## No Justice for Haiti

PHOTO AND TEXT  
BY ISABEL MACDONALD

**PRISON WITHOUT PUNISHMENT:** Haitian death squad leader and Queens resident Emmanuel “Toto” Constant was convicted of grand larceny and fraud by the New York Supreme Court July 25. More than 50 people gathered outside the courthouse July 8 for Constant’s pre-trial, calling for Constant, who led the notorious paramilitary death squad Front for the Advancement and Progress of Haiti (FRAPH), to also be brought to justice for human rights crimes. In the early 1990s, FRAPH terrorized thousands of supporters of then-Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide through murder, beatings, rape, raids on poor neighborhoods and arson — with the goal of destroying the popular support for Aristide and his Lavalas political movement. Constant’s \$1.7 million mortgage fraud conviction arrived in the midst of his efforts to avoid paying \$19 million in damages to survivors of FRAPH’s systematic torture and fear campaign ordered by a federal judge in 2004. Constant will be sentenced Sept. 10 and could face 15 to 45 years in prison.

For the full story, see [indypendent.org](http://indypendent.org).



# Bhopal Takes Action

By JESSIE BHANGOO

Twenty-three years after the worst chemical leak in Indian history, momentum is building — both in the streets and in top government circles — to enforce needed remediation and address tens of thousands of ailing victims. Documents recently uncovered by journalists show that the Indian government would require the U.S.-based corporation, Dow Chemical Company, to rehabilitate the Union Carbide disaster site in Bhopal as a condition for future investment in India. The Parliament appears poised to launch a special commission to take concrete action, however, hundreds of demonstrators have vowed to stay in the streets until the government keeps its word.

DEATH IN THE NIGHT

On the night of Dec. 2, 1984, 27 tons of lethal methyl isocyanate gas leaked from Union Carbide’s pesticide factory in Bhopal, India, immediately killing at least 3,000 people and up to 8,000 two-weeks later. Estimates of those still suffering adverse health effects range from 50,000, according to the Indian Council of Medical Research, to 150,000, according to the International Campaign for Justice (ICJB) in Bhopal. At the time, Union Carbide claimed that a leak of this size must have been committed by an experienced saboteur. However, when Bhopal residents learned that the safety systems were either broken or simply turned off to save money, they looked to the U.S. company for compensation.

Michigan-based Dow bought out Union Carbide in 2001 and has since refused to accept liability for the incident.

“There is no responsibility and no liability for the Bhopal tragedy,” said Scot Wheeler, Director of Communications for the Michigan-based company, in a *New York Times* article July 7.

Bhopal residents cite U.S., Indian and international law to support their own claim that Dow, as the new 100 percent owner of Union Carbide, owns both its assets and liabilities.

...“It is this policy of double standards that caused the death and destruction in Bhopal,” said Shahid Noor, who was orphaned by the toxic gas leak.

While the legal battle continues, 425 tons of hazardous waste continue to saturate the soil, and seep down into the groundwater of the 11-acre contaminated site, poisoning current water supplies that affect thousands of residents.

In a move to put pressure on the government in February, 50 people marched 500 miles from Bhopal to New Delhi — the Indian capital — to start an indefinite protest and hunger strike. More than 800 people have now joined the demonstration.

PASSING THE BLAME

In a November 2006 letter to India’s ambassador to the United States, Dow CEO Andrew Liveris formally asked the government to waive any responsibility the company has to clean up the site. The letter was sent even as Dow looks to expand its investment and operations in India. Under the Indian Right to Information Act, journalists uncovered

a document from the Prime Minister’s Office dated Feb. 7, 2008, that revealed the Indian government should in fact hold Liveris’ company liable. In the document, the Law Ministry stated that, “Irrespective of the manner in which [Union Carbide] has merged or been acquired by Dow Chemicals, if there is any legal liability, it would have to be borne by Dow Chemicals.” The Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh has yet to reply to the revealed document. Dow is already in a unfavorable position as they were caught bribing officials to let them sell illegal pesticides in India last year.

As the hunger strike continued, news stories consistently portrayed the Bhopal struggle positively and highlighted the Indian government’s inaction. In response, police attacked the strikers, arresting and beating several individuals June 9.

The strikers are not alone. Amnesty International is organizing solidarity events throughout North America and Europe. On July 14, alumni of the prestigious Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) also took action to force the school to refuse Dow’s corporate sponsorship of several of their campuses’ jubilee conferences. On July 26, a Dow research center in construction in the

Indian village of Shinde Vasuli was vandalized and set on fire by the Warkaris, a radical environmental religious sect who defied authorities by videotaping themselves committing the arson. According to activists, Indian police are engaged in an aggressive crackdown in the village, arbitrarily arresting scores of local residents.

As the issue gained visibility in local and international press, the Indian Parliament drafted a bill which will empower a new commission to pursue rehabilitation in Bhopal. The Prime Minister formally announced the commission May 29, declaring that this group would “carry out medical, economic, social and environmental rehabilitation of the Bhopal gas victims,” but has been slow to hire staff. The ICJB is reviewing the draft and will suggest potential members.

AIMING FOR THE COURT ROOM

Ultimately, the campaign hopes to force Dow’s Union Carbide Indian division to stand trial in Bhopal for culpable homicide. The Indian government has so far avoided accelerating the extradition of Union Carbide representatives to face trial in Bhopal. Many Indian businessmen and government

officials outside of Bhopal are interested in attracting Dow investment even if they have to sacrifice Bhopal residents’ health. Commerce and Industry Minister Kamal Nath defended Dow’s position, saying that, “Dow themselves had no status in this, so Dow’s investment is not affected by that.” He continued to explain he was concerned about “sending an appropriate signal to Dow Chemical, which is exploring investing substantially in India.”

Meanwhile, the hunger strike continues in 24-hour rotations as campaign members promise to monitor the establishment of the commission, pursue court action that would force Dow to pay for a Bhopal clean-up and get the clean water project back on schedule.

Dow, meanwhile, continues to regain public support through its lavish “Human Element” campaign. Dow has spared no expense, hiring public relations giants GolinHarris and Draft FCB at a cost of \$8 million in 2006 to “re-brand” their corporate image to that of social responsibility. Meanwhile, they are aggressively at work to extinguish remaining legal claims in both India and the United States.



**POISONED WITHOUT JUSTICE:** (Top) On the 20th anniversary of the Bhopal industrial disaster in 2004, activists display images to demand justice. PHOTO: GREENPEACE.ORG (Above) More than 30 peaceful Bhopali demonstrators are arrested June 9, 2008, after carrying out a “die-in” in front of the Indian prime minister’s office. There have been ongoing protests since March in the hopes of forcing the government to hold Dow Chemical Company accountable for the 1984 massive chemical leak. PHOTO: BHOPAL.NET

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THE INDEPENDENT

AUGUST 8 – SEPTEMBER 11, 2008

5



# BATTLE OF THE EXES: Two Movements in the Gay Community

By MATT KENNARD

Joshua Ligan was 12 years old when the questions started. Relatives wondered if the boy was too effeminate. Family friends speculated about his lack of interest in girls. Soon both groups were warning his parents about allowing Joshua to fall in with “the wrong crowd.”

His conservative Christian-Filipino parents finally asked their son: Are you gay?

“I was raised to be honest — I admitted it,” said Ligan, now a 24-year-old theology student from Silicon Valley, Calif. “It wasn’t pretty. My parents were extremely distressed.”

Ligan’s family contacted a local Christian ministry and he began weekly counseling sessions that would begin with gender role discussions, and end with “deliverance,” which Ligan calls a “fundamentalist Christian form of exorcism.”

“I felt as if I was being suffocated,” he said. “They wouldn’t leave you alone until you renounce the spirit of homosexuality. It feels like you are renouncing yourself; it’s like losing your identity or losing your name.”

## A MOVEMENT BUILDS

Over the past 30 years, activists have built a constellation of groups known collectively as the “ex-gay movement.” Countless different organizations exist in the United States — cutting across the Christian and Jewish faiths — which promote “alternatives” to homosexuality and run programs that claim success in cleansing the mind of homosexual urges. The largest program, Exodus International, has claimed a 71 percent increase in member agencies over the past five years.

This month, People Can Change (PCC), an ex-gay organization based in Virginia, released a survey of 200 men who had completed their program, ranging from six months out to five years.

“We wanted to ascertain whether they had had a change in sexual feeling over the months and years since they went through it,” said Richard Wyler, 45, the director of the program at PCC, and an ex-gay for the last 20 years, after being homosexual for



JENNIFER LEW

14 years. “We found that four out of five people had found that they felt diminished homosexual feeling. Thirty-one percent said they felt a significant change, 32 percent said a moderate change and 16 percent said they felt a small decrease in homosexual feelings.”

Wyler said they had no specific definitions for “significant” or “moderate” change, but that he was optimistic about the results. “That’s 79 percent saying they feel less frequency of homosexual feelings. Now, obviously they don’t experience change based on one weekend, but what the weekend does is open them up to new ways of living life.”

A weekend run by PCC involves 48 hours of lectures, prayer, male-bonding sessions and reparative counseling and costs \$650. “We also get them to look at experiences that may have led them to feel homosexual feelings,” Wyler said. “More than a half had histories of being sexually abused.”

PCC says it is not a religious organization, although Wyler is a Mormon. “What motivates us is our personal values,” he said.

Other organizations have overt religious agendas, including Exodus. Its program

literature claims that homosexuality is “a multi-causal, developmental disorder that can be overcome with the help of professional counselors and that an individual can experience transformation through the healing power of Jesus Christ.” To help in this purpose, Exodus runs group workshops and offers one-on-one counseling and other pastoral care.

Randy Thomas, 39, is the executive vice president of Exodus and an ex-gay himself. “I became a Christian at 24, but I didn’t come to Christ to not be gay,” he said. “It was only after a few months, I realized I didn’t have to be gay, so I decided to live according to my faith. That was 16 years ago.”

## DETERMINING SUCCESS

In the ex-gay movement there is a spectrum of what is considered success. On one end are those who purport a full conversion to heterosexuality. On the other end are those plagued by guilt, unable to cleanse themselves of their urges. Thomas stands somewhere in the middle. “I have not experienced a full orientation shift,” Thomas said. “But I went from 100 percent exclusively homosexual, to where I would feel okay being a husband and having a wife.”

Does he get tempted? “Very rarely,” he said. “Not like it was at the start of the journey. Today I have some temptations here or there, but I have no romantic desires to pursue relationships.” In fact, last year he split up with his girlfriend of a year, a fellow ex-gay. “We broke up because, though we loved each other, we weren’t meant to be husband and wife,” he said. “She was particularly ex-gay,” he added.

Throughout their courtship, there were no sexual relations. “Sex outside of marriage is not a good thing,” Thomas said. However, he added, chuckling, “There was definitely chemistry.”

Thomas reports a growth in international support for Exodus. “We’ve seen more interest coming out of the Middle East as well as Asia,” he said. “And there’s been a spike in interest from the Western Church.”

As the movement has become more vocal, opposition groups have been formed by gay men and women who say they are repulsed by “ex-gay” therapies. They call themselves

the “ex-ex-gay movement.”

“Faith fanatics are not seeking to ‘cure’ lesbians and gays out of the goodness of their heart,” said Peter Tatchell, co-founder of OUTrage, a British gay rights group. “They regard same-sex relationships as immoral and sinful. Their homophobia is not far removed from that of neo-Nazi groups. Their aim is the eradication of homosexuality.”

“A person’s sexuality cannot be changed like changing a hairstyle or a pair of jeans,” Tatchell continued. “Scientific evidence shows that sexual orientation is mostly determined by an individual’s genes.”

## A JOURNEY BACK TO ONE’S SELF

Peterson Toscano, 43, of Irvine, Calif., co-founded “Beyond Ex-Gay,” the leading ex-gay organization, and is now dedicating his life to his cause. Toscano tried to be an ex-gay for nearly two decades, spending \$30,000 on counseling and traveling across three continents looking to escape his impulses, only to grow suicidal and alienated from his family and work.

Toscano is still a devout Christian but no longer feels his sexuality contradicts his belief in God. “I’m a Quaker,” he explained. “I see that scriptures against gay people have been mishandled and not used correctly. I don’t see any conflict with being gay and Christian.”

But he is worried another generation will fall prey to the ex-gay promise.

Sean, 24, from Chicago, (who asked to be identified only by his first name) now lives in Buenos Aires as an openly gay man, but when he came out to his parents at 21, he plunged into depression and contemplated suicide.

“My parents instantly bought every book they could find, and everything they read said it was their fault,” Sean said. “My dad started to think he was an absent father, my mom thought she was overbearing. Neither is true. They are very loving.”

Sean agreed to attend the annual five-day Exodus Conference after his parents threatened to cut him off financially.

“It was extremely intense,” he said. “You have five long days planned out for you. I went to youth seminars. My dad went to ones for parents. Then you have gender identity sessions where guys play ultimate Frisbee and girls do girly things.”

Not everything went according to the Exodus plan, however.

“Me and this guy had a connection,” he said. “We made eye contact. We went into a room with three other guys to have a kind of slumber party, hands touching under blankets. After that we had to go to bed. I was bunking with dad. I told him one of my friends was having a hard time. My dad thought it was a great thing my helping this guy, and meanwhile, I fooled around.”

Thomas of Exodus admitted to cases of homosexual activity at the conference even though it is punishable by exclusion from the conference.

“The funny thing is,” Sean said, “afterwards I said to another guy how surprised I was that I had heard so little about people hooking up. He said, ‘Are you serious?’ Apparently a lot of people do it.”



PHOTO: PETERSON TOSCANO



PHOTO: PEOPLECANCHANGE.COM

**LOOKING INSIDE:** (Left) Peterson Toscano, co-founder of Beyond Ex-Gay, an organization dedicated to fighting back against the ex-gay movement. (Above) A male-bonding session at People Can Change weekend retreat. The group claims 79 percent of homosexual attendees experience “less frequency of homosexual feelings.”



# Convention Countdowns



By Abby Scher

During the 2004 Republican National Convention in New York City, police arrested more than 1,800 people, illegally fingerprinted massive numbers of detainees and crammed other demonstrators into restrictive “free speech zones.” Whatever message activists were trying to relay was overwhelmed by police seeking total control of public space and information about activists’ political affiliations and opinions.

Eventually, the world learned that for months prior to the RNC, the FBI and the New York Police Department were also spying on activists across the United States, Canada and Europe. And video evidence from the activist group I-Witness Video proved that police deployed provocateurs to create chaos in order to justify police attacks and mass roundups.

Four years later, civil liberties lawyers and activists are laboring to ensure that NYPD tactics are not employed in Denver, Colo., site of the Democratic National Convention starting Aug. 25, and St. Paul, Minn., where the Republicans are holding their convention starting Sept. 1.

“People have the right to come to an event and be heard and think of themselves as a citizen, not just as a protester,” says Bruce Nestor, former president of the National Lawyers Guild, who is helping with legal work in the Twin Cities. “When you’re confined in a barricade or a pen it’s hard to get people to come and believe that they really have a right to freely act and to freely express their opinion.”

Twin Cities police are planning for as many as 100,000 demonstrators on the streets on the first day of the RNC, who will be protesting the Iraq War and lack of social investment. In Denver, thousands of young people are coming to town for Tent State University, part of the Alliance for Real Democracy, which will present alternatives to activities inside the convention center. Tent State will feature “classes” and music.

There are already signs of intelligence gathering and harsh policing in what local activists call “test runs” for the convention. Last August, St. Paul police reportedly attacked Critical Mass bicycle riders with mace and tasers in what one lawyer called a “police riot,” arresting 19 on charges of disorderly conduct. In Denver, police rounded up 82 people last Columbus Day — and arrested one person who tried to photograph

someone he suspected was an undercover officer.

This July, Erin Rosa of the *Colorado Independent* reported that the regional government “fusion” center, staffed with personnel affiliated with the FBI, Colorado State Police and Colorado National Guard, was preparing to sort through and analyze “intelligence” from multiple government and business sources for use by law enforcement in Denver during the convention. While Denver activists and lawyers see no sign of active surveillance, Mark Silverstein, lead attorney with the American Civil Liberties Union of Colorado, notes such evidence usually surfaces after the fact.

In the Twin Cities, some activists have reported visits from the Joint Terrorism Task Force and county sheriff. After one University of Minnesota student was nabbed by campus police for spray-painting graffiti, an FBI agent pressured him to spy on vegan potlucks during the RNC and report back to the Joint Terrorism Task Force. (The story, “Moles Wanted,” is at [citypages.com](http://citypages.com).) The Ramsey County Sheriff visited a member of the anarchist RNC Welcoming Committee at her workplace in a possible attempt at intimidation.

Activists say other tactics reminiscent of 2004 threaten to restrict their freedom of speech. Both cities dragged their feet issuing march permits, giving organizers less time to prepare. Denver officials gave march organizers a finishing point, blocks from the convention center, hidden by the press tent. In St. Paul, lawyers were able to secure activists’ access to the streets in sight of delegates, but the march is required to end before the convention begins.

Still, creativity is sweeping through the cities. Artists with the UnConvention in the Twin Cities are soliciting videos against the RNC and will plaster yards with posters declaring, “I’m for Pre-emptive Peace.” Zoe Williams, a 22-year-old activist with Code Pink and the Colorado Street Medics, says activists are coming up “with positive ways to express ourselves,” but “with the city we continually have to argue with them about our first amendment rights.”

*Abby Scher is editor of The Public Eye, the publication of the progressive think tank Political Research Associates. For a longer version of this article and other coverage of the party conventions and protests, see [indypendent.org](http://indypendent.org) and [nyc.indymedia.org](http://nyc.indymedia.org).*



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# WELCOME TO DONKEYLAND! AS OBAMA PREPARES TO ACCEPT THE NOMINATION, IT'S TIME TO GET REAL ABOUT THE DEMOCRATS.

By John Tarleton

When Democrats gather in Denver later this month to nominate Barack Obama for president later this month, one of the event's main corporate sponsors will be AT&T, which will splash its brand all over the convention, right down to the 2008 Democratic National Convention totebags that will be given to all the delegates and credentialed media.



Corporate money flows through many channels to reach congressional Democrats. Candidates raise millions from lobbyists and corporations to fill their own war chests. Prominent Congresspersons also bring in hundreds of thousands of dollars for their personal political action committees, which they use to bankroll needy colleagues in return for future favors and support. And then there's the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee (DSCC) and the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC), which raise and spend tens of millions of dollars to help Democratic candidates. The recipients of this largesse, of course, come into office indebted to the party's congressional leadership.



**REP. NANCY PELOSI (CALIF.)** — Pelosi's rise to the House Speaker's chair was fueled by her fundraising prowess. Her largest contributor this election cycle is the powerhouse corporate law firm Akin & Gump.

**REP. STENY HOYER (MD.)** — House Majority Leader. Top donors include JPMorgan Chase and Comcast. His Political Action Committee (PAC) has received \$15,000 in donations from top execs at MacAndrews and Forbes, whose chairman, Ronald Perelman, made hundreds of millions of dollars off the 1980s-era Savings & Loan crisis.

**REP. RAHM EMANUEL (ILL.)** — Widely credited with helping the Dems regain the House of Representatives in 2006 as the head of the DCCC, this former Clinton aide-turned-investment banker-turned Congressional leader is known for his relentless fundraising. Top donors to his own campaign include UBS AG, Blackstone Group and JPMorgan Chase. Emanuel's PAC has also scooped up more than \$600,000 in the 2008 election cycle, mainly from the finance, real estate and entertainment industries.



**SEN. CHUCK SCHUMER (NY)** — Chair of the DSCC and a powerful member of the Senate Finance Committee, Schumer is a champion fundraiser with close ties to Wall Street who led the Democratic takeover of the Senate in 2006.

**REP. CHARLES RANGEL (NY)** — Chair of the House Ways and Means Committee, which writes tax legislation, Rangel has received over \$4.1 million in campaign donations since he became the committee's new chair in Jan. 2007. Meanwhile, his political action committee has been showered with \$1.04 million in contributions, much of it from New York City real estate interests.

**REP. JOHN DINGELL (MICH.)** — Chair of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, this longtime Congressman has been the auto industry's most dogged advocate for decades, fighting everything from air bags to higher gas mileage standards to the science of global warming.



**BLUE DOG DEMOCRATS** — A coalition of 47 conservative Democratic lawmakers whom effectively hold the balance of power in the House of Representatives. They mostly represent rural or ex-urban districts in the South and the West, and support both large military budgets and cuts in social spending.

For progressives, who have watched with dismay this summer as the presumptive nominee staked out increasingly rightward positions on a number of issues, including immunity for telecoms that participated in President Bush's domestic spying programs, the cozy partnership of Obama and the Democrats with AT&T is just one more thing to grind their teeth about. "The Obama brand has always been about inspiration, a new kind of politics, the audacity of hope, and 'change we can believe in,'" writes Arianna Huffington of *Huffington Post*. "I like that brand. More importantly, voters — especially unlikely voters — like that brand. Pulling it off the shelf and replacing it with a political product geared to pleasing America's vacillating swing voters would be a fatal blunder." A more useful way to assess Obama's politics is to take a closer look at some of the dominant forces in the Democratic Party that he has openly embraced. While it is impossible to convey all the thousands of interlocking relationships that bind the corporate center of the Democratic Party, even a small sampling strongly suggests that it will take a lot more than voting for one man for us to see real change in this country.

## LOBBYISTS & LAW FIRMS

The biggest winners of the 2006 mid-term elections may have been Democratic lobbyists, many of whom team up with their Republican counterparts to work for some of America's largest corporations.

**THOMAS HALE BOGGS JR./PATTON BOGGS:** Son of a former Democratic majority leader and older brother of television journalist Cokie Roberts, Boggs was ranked as the capital's top lobbyist in 2007 by *Washingtonian Magazine*. Boggs represents more than 50 corporations, trade associations and state and foreign governments, while his firm Patton Boggs rakes in \$70 million per year in fees from a roster of 350 clients. Patton Boggs specializes in international trade law. Since its founding in 1962, it has participated in the formation of every major multilateral trade agreement considered by Congress.

**TONY AND HEATHER PODESTA:** This husband-and-wife team are both prominent Democratic Party fundraisers and each runs their own lobbying firm. Tony Podesta heads The Podesta Group which was rated the third most effective lobbying firm in 2007 by *Washingtonian Magazine*. His clients include Lockheed Martin, the National Association of Broadcasters and BP America while Heather Podesta & Partners represents Boeing and HSBC North America, among others.

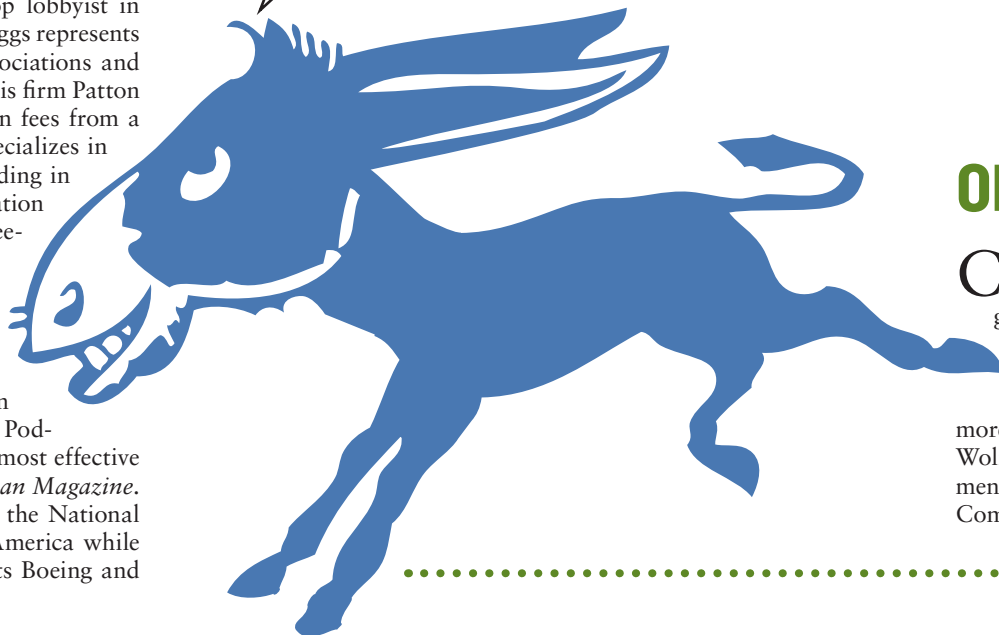
**JACK QUINN/QUINN GILLESPIE & ASSOCIATES:** This former Clinton White House Counsel has teamed up with former Republican National Committee Chair Ed Gillespie to pull in millions in fees from public accountants, drug companies, banks and telecommunications companies.

**JOHN MERRIGAN/DLA PIPER:** Merrigan is the brains behind DLA Piper whose roster of lobbyists included former Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell, former Democratic House Majority Leader Richard Gephardt and former Republican House Majority Leader Dick Armey. DLA Piper's clients include Kraft Foods, Lockheed Martin and Lehman Brothers. From 1996 until 2000, Merrigan served as chairman of the Democratic Business Council, the leading forum for business interests within the Democratic National Party.

**AKIN GUMP:** Founded by former DNC Chairman Robert Strauss, Akin & Gump has offices in 14 countries and provides both lobbying and legal services to its blue-chip clients. It has given more than \$2 million to the Democrats in this election cycle.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY, SEE [INDYPENDENT.ORG/DEMOCRATS](http://INDYPENDENT.ORG/DEMOCRATS)

SOURCES: OPENSECRETS.ORG, WHITEHOUSE-FORSALE.ORG, SOURCEWATCH.ORG, NYTIMES.COM, LATIMES.COM, WASHINGTONIAN.COM, BLUEDOGDEMS.COM, TRUTHDIG.ORG.



## DEMOCRATIC PARTY WISE MEN

**Robert Rubin:** Treasury Secretary and top economic advisor in the Clinton administration, Rubin was the architect of the financial deregulation that set the stage for the subprime mortgage crisis. Days after leaving office in 1999, Rubin took a \$15 million-per-year job at Citigroup, one of the main beneficiaries of his deregulatory zeal. More recently, Rubin founded the Hamilton Project, a centrist think tank that advises Democrats on economic issues. He is also co-chair of the Council on Foreign Relations.



**Jason Furman:** A champion of free trade and Wal-Mart's low-wage business model, Furman was chosen by Robert Rubin to head the Hamilton Project in 2006. In June, Obama named him to head his economic policy team, much to

the dismay of unions and liberal activists.

**Sam Nunn:** Former head of the Senate Armed Services Committee, Nunn is Co-Chair of the Georgetown Center for Strategic and International Studies, a bastion of hawkish foreign policy elites from both parties. Nunn is currently a top foreign policy advisor to Obama and is frequently mentioned as a possible vice-presidential nominee. Nunn serves on the board of ChevronTexaco and is a partner in King & Spaulding, a giant Atlanta law firm with extensive dealings in the Middle East.

**David Boren:** He chaired the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence before retiring in 1994. His top aide and protégé George Tenet went on to lead the CIA under Presidents Clinton and Bush, famously providing the "slam dunk" evidence for going to war with Iraq.

Like Nunn, Boren serves as an Obama foreign policy advisor. His son Dan Boren is an Oklahoma Congressman and one of the leaders of the conservative Blue Dog faction that holds the balance of power in the House.



**James R. Jones:** Think Obama will renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)? Ask this former Oklahoma congressman and D.C. insider who helped shepherd NAFTA into existence as Clinton's Ambassador to Mexico from 1993 to 1997. Since leaving office he has served as the head of the U.S.-Mexico Business Commission, sat on a half-dozen corporate boards, and teamed up with former DNC Chair Charles Manatt to launch a company that helps foreign

investors enter the Mexican and Latin American markets.

**Lee Hamilton:** This former Indiana congressman has been a go-to guy for "bipartisan" foreign policy solutions since he helped bring Congress' investigation into Ronald Reagan's role in the Iran-Contra scandal to an early end in 1987. Hamilton was appointed by President Bush to be the top Democrat on the 9-11 Commission and he was also co-chair of the Iraq Study Group. He currently heads the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Studies and is a director of the National Endowment for Democracy, which provides training and assistance to U.S.-friendly political candidates around the world.

**Tom Daschle:** Daschle was the Senate Majority Leader in 2001-2002 when the Democrats signed off on the USA PATRIOT Act and

the Iraq War. Former staffers of his are prominent in the Obama campaign including Denis McDonough, who is Obama's top foreign policy advisor. Daschle is currently ensconced as a senior fellow at the Center for American Progress, while his wife Linda Daschle, is a top lobbyist for the airline industry and has recently broadened her business into rail and telecommunications as well.



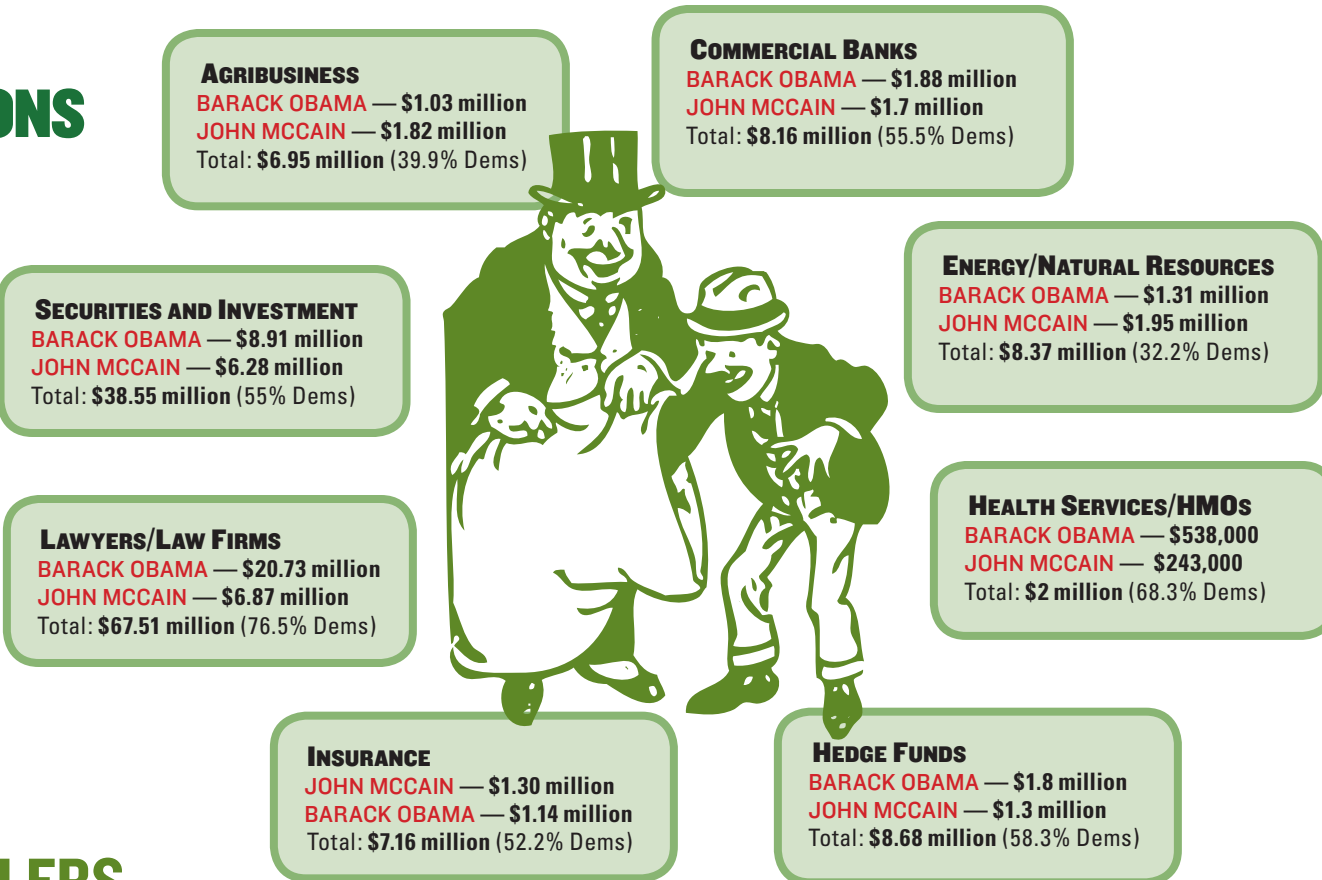
**Vernon Jordan:** Former civil rights leader, legendary for being the Clintons' favorite black friend, Jordan sits on numerous corporate boards, is a partner at Akin & Gump, senior managing director at the investment bank Lezard & Freres and was a member of the Iraq Study Group.

## THE PRESIDENTIAL MONEY RACE

While the Obama campaign has had unprecedented success with raising small donations through the Internet, it is also getting a friendly reception from big business interests.

## SECTORAL DONATIONS

While presidential elections are official contests between two candidates and their respective parties, they can also be seen as battles for supremacy among different sectors of the economy. The Republicans are running strongest among resource extraction industries located in the interior of the country, while the Democrats' financial base is centered in the finance, real estate and insurance industries and blue-chip corporate law firms. Here are how the candidates are faring as of July 28, according to the Center for Responsive Politics.



## OBAMA BUNDLERS

Campaign finance laws now restrict individual campaign donations to a single candidate to \$2,300 in the primaries and another \$2,300 in the general election. This has given rise to "bundlers" who can draw on large social networks of well-to-do friends and colleagues. To date, Obama has raised \$112 million in donations of \$1,000 or more, thanks in large part to the efforts of more than 500 bundlers who have each collected contributions totaling \$50,000 and up. Top bundlers who have raised more than \$500,000 for Obama include: hedge fund executive Orin Kramer; Robert Wolf, President of UBS Investment Bank; healthcare investor Alan Solomont; entertainment mogul Jeffrey Katzenberg; and Bill Kennard, Clinton-era Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, who is now a managing director of the Carlyle Group.

## WAL-MART & THE DEMOCRATS

Wal-Mart has given more to Democrats than ever before this election cycle — \$565,500, or 43 percent of its total contributions — when counting both PAC contributions and individual donations, according to the Center for Responsive Politics. In 2006, Wal-Mart hired longtime Democratic Party operative Leslie Dach to lead its public relations offensive against critics of its labor and environmental policies.

THESE GATEKEEPERS OF CONVENTIONAL WISDOM HAVE CLOSE TIES TO CORPORATE INTERESTS AND ADVOCATE A DOMINANT ROLE FOR THE US IN WORLD AFFAIRS.



More a mirror on the world than a refuge from it, the Olympics have always been about more than gold medals. All eyes will be on China as many aim to use the spotlight of the Games to bring change.

JOHN CARLOS,  
40 YEARS LATER

John Carlos had known a lifetime of racism by the time he took to the podium to receive a bronze medal in the 1968 Olympics. Born in Harlem, he won a track and field scholarship to San Jose State University only to find himself and other black athletes still treated as second-class citizens. While the action taken by Carlos and his San Jose State teammate Tommie Smith would come to symbolize the defiance of a generation, both men would be shunned and face years of discrimination upon returning to the United States. Now an in-school suspension supervisor who works with troubled youth at Palm Springs High School (Calif.), Carlos recently reflected on his Olympic journey with The Independent’s Nicholas Powers.

**Nicholas Powers:** What is the responsibility of today’s athletes?  
**John Carlos:** First safeguard what you have been training to do your whole lives. Be smart, if you’re going to protest, have a full understanding of the scene. You’re going to need moral character to stand up against what’s going to come at you.

**NP:** In the 1968 Olympics, were other athletes talking about protesting?  
**JC:** It was small stuff. Some wore black socks or black berets, but nothing too black or it would offend white society. But the point was to create some dialogue, to make them mad enough to get them to talk. The fallout, after we protested, is they took away my ability to earn a living, to support my family. Friends and family left fearing a reprisal for associating with me. Authorities took their anger out on my kids in school. What kept me sane was that in my heart and mind and soul I knew I did the right thing.



John Carlos. PHOTO: LEE CANTELON

**NP:** Why is that photo of you and Tommie Smith so powerful even 40 years later?  
**JC:** The picture is a beacon of hope for all humanity, for all people to keep the faith.

**NP:** What was the physical feeling that moment on the podium?  
**JC:** I was charged. I was more charged than ever in my life. When I left the podium I was not the same man who stepped up. I came down a free man. I’m humbled that God would pick me when I was seven years old; God gave me a vision of being in a stadium and feeling like a winner. I remember telling my father about it.

**NP:** What was it like to live in a time of such radical consciousness?  
**JC:** It felt natural. We looked at ourselves to raise the level of consciousness. I don’t think we are as hungry for knowledge now as we were then.

Never Forgetting the Fist BY DAVE ZIRIN

The image lasted for only as long as it took to play the National Anthem — yet it still resonates four decades later. Black American sprinters Tommie Smith and John Carlos, winners of the gold and bronze in the 200-meter race, respectively, bow their heads and raise their black-gloved fists in protest during the medal ceremony at the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City. Unlike other 1960s iconography — Woodstock, Abbie Hoffman, Richard Nixon — the moment doesn’t feel musty. It still packs a wallop. Just ask *LA Times* columnist Jonah Goldberg, still so worked up about their gesture that he wrote on July 29 — in language that would shame a satirist — that it was “a symbol of violence — rhetorical, political and literal — against the United States.” (The violence was actually more seen in the response to Smith and Carlos, with death threats and even bullets sent to their homes. But Goldberg doesn’t bother to mention that.) In Harlem, street-corner merchants even now sell t-shirts with the image of Smith and Carlos emblazoned on them. On HBO in August, you could watch the 2004 documentary “Fists of Freedom,” which told the story behind the protest. On ESPN, a running question for athletes competing in the 2008 Games in Beijing, which begin Friday, is whether they will “pull a Smith and Carlos” to protest the lack of human rights in China. (This question is somewhat odd because the two former athletes did not go to Mexico City to criticize Mexico.)


I recently appeared on a panel on the his-

tory of sports and resistance with Carlos and afterward, a long line of young people born years — even decades — after 1968 patiently waited for the former athlete to sign posters, t-shirts, even pins memorializing his protest. Why has that moment 40 years ago retained its cultural capital? There are several reasons for the image’s staying power. The most obvious is that people love a good redemption song. Smith and Carlos were protesting racism in sports and society. They wanted South Africa and Rhodesia banned from the 1968 Games because of their apartheid politics. They demanded more black coaches in sports. They sought to hold Avery Brundage, president of the International Olympic Committee, accountable for what many black athletes thought to be a barely concealed racism. They wanted Muhammad Ali — “the warrior saint of the black athlete’s revolt” — to have his heavyweight boxing title restored after it was stripped because of Ali’s refusal to fight in Vietnam. But it was more than a moment, it was a movement called the Olympic Project for Human Rights (OPHR). As Dr. Harry Edwards, who helped organize OPHR, wrote, “It was inevitable that this revolt of the black athlete should develop. With struggles being waged by black people in the areas of education, housing employment and many others, it was only a matter of time before Afro-American athletes shed their fantasies and delusions and asserted their manhood and faced the facts of their existence. ... The

roots spring from the same seed that produced the sit-ins, the freedom rides and the rebellions in Watts, Detroit and Newark.” Smith and Carlos were reviled for taking a stand and using the Olympic podium to do it. But their “radical” demands have since proved to be prescient. Today the idea of standing up to apartheid South Africa, racism, and for Muhammad Ali seems more common sensical than radical. After years of death threats and lives as athletic pariahs, Smith and Carlos attend ceremonial unveilings of statues erected in their honor. It’s been quite an adventure, one that says more about our collective journey than theirs. There’s another reason why the image of raised black-gloved fists have retained their power. Smith and Carlos sacrificed privilege and glory, fame and fortune, for a larger cause — civil rights. As Carlos told me in a 2003 interview “A lot of the [black] athletes thought that winning [Olympic] medals would supercede or protect them from racism. But even if you won a medal, it ain’t going to save your momma [from the effects of racism] It ain’t going to save your sister or children. It might give you 15 minutes of fame, but what about the rest of your life?” Carlos’ attitude resonates because we still live in a world where racism is evident. If Hurricane Katrina taught us nothing else, it’s that for every Barack Obama and Condoleezza Rice, there are many communities from New Orleans to South Central Los Angeles where poverty on one side and rac-

1936 BERLIN

Leading up to the 1936 Olympics, several years of widespread protests against the “Nazi games” took place in the United States, largely organized by religious, civil liberties, civil rights and labor groups. A proposed U.S. boycott of the games was narrowly defeated in a vote by the Amateur Athletic Union. African-American sprinter Jesse Owens, who at first supported a boycott, then went on to belie the Nazi belief in Aryan supremacy by winning four gold medals and breaking numerous Olympic and world records.



Jesse Owens

1956 MELBOURNE

The Melbourne Olympics heralded the era of national boycotts. Egypt, Lebanon and Iraq withdrew from the Games, protesting the British and French seizure by force of the Suez Canal crisis. The Netherlands, Spain and Switzerland also boycotted to protest the Soviet Union’s presence in the games, after Soviet troops crushed a revolt in Hungary that year.

1964 TOKYO

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) South Africa banned from the Games by due to its selection of athletes based on race. South Africa was invited to the 1968 Mexico Games, but international protests by athletes led to the invitation being revoked. (Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, was expelled from the 1972 Munich Games for similar race-based practices).

1968 MEXICO

This was the first time a “developing” nation hosted the Olympics Games. Mexican President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz was determined to showcase the country’s economic boom and the virtues of his party, the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI). In the months leading up to the games, against a backdrop of global protest movements, Mexican student groups, with broad public support, organized sustained protests for educational reform and democracy. The watershed moment, however, was the Tlatelolco Massacre Oct. 2, days before the games began, when the army and police opened fire on thousands of demonstrators and spectators, killing hundreds and arresting more than 2,000. The games continued unaffected and little media attention was given to the violence. The better known controversy was generated by African-American sprinters Tommie Smith and John Carlos. (See Dave Zirin article above).

1972 MUNICH

Palestinian militants of the Black September Organization kill one Israeli athlete and take 11 others hostage, demanding the release of 234 prisoners held by Israel. Five gunmen and all of the hostages were killed in botched rescue attempt. The IOC temporarily suspended competition and held a memorial the next day. African-American Robert Taylor follows in the footsteps of Smith and Carlos by raising a Black Power salute after qualifying for the 100-meter finals.



ism on the other create a crushing vice on black Americans.

It also resonates because Smith and Carlos used the ubiquitous platform of sports to make their stand. Today, sports is a global, multi-trillion dollar business that, thanks to cable television, the Internet and corporate sponsorship, is vastly more influential than four decades ago. Yet the idea that today's athletes would use their hyper-exalted-brought-to-you-by-Nike platform to speak out against injustice seems almost unthinkable. Athletes like Etan Thomas of the National Basketball Assn. and Scott Fujita of the National Football League have spoken out on war, poverty, and racism in the United States. Some platinum-plated stars on the U.S. Olympic basketball team — notably Kobe Bryant and LeBron James — have raised concerns about China's connection to the genocide in Darfur.

None of this, however, comes close to matching the audacity of Smith's and Carlos' moment at the 1968 Olympics. It does serve to remind us of a time when even the world of sports wasn't immune to the politics of protest. And as Jonah Goldberg's column demonstrates, it still holds the power to upset all the right people.

Dave Zirin, sports correspondent for The Nation magazine, is the author of A People's History of Sports in the United States (The New Press), which will be released Sept. 3 at the Brecht Forum (See Community Calendar, Page 2).



**FROZEN IN TIME:** On the podium at the 1968 Olympics, U.S. sprinters Tommie Smith (center) raised his right fist to protest racism, while John Carlos (right) lifted his left fist to symbolize Black unity. PHOTO: ASSOCIATED PRESS

## 1976 MONTREAL

Twenty-six African nations boycotted protesting New Zealand's presence at the Games. The New Zealand rugby team had previously toured apartheid South Africa.

## 1980 MOSCOW

U.S. President Jimmy Carter orchestrates a 64-nation boycott after the Soviet Union invades Afghanistan.

## 1984 LOS ANGELES

Eastern bloc countries participate in a tit-for-tat boycott of the Games, claiming "concerns" for athlete safety.

## 1988 CALGARY winter games

The Lubicon Lake Indian Nation, centered in Alberta Province, led protests along the Olympic torch route and a boycott by 30 international museums, that refused to lend artifacts for an Olympic display of Indian art sponsored by Royal Dutch Shell. The Lubicon Crees hoped to draw attention to the damaging effects of oil drilling, and other resource exploitation, on their land.

## 2000 SYDNEY



Cathy Freeman

Aboriginal groups vosed to organize massive protests during the games to highlight glaring social inequality and impoverishment affecting indigenous people. Fearing social unrest, Olympic organizers responded by reaching out to prominent Aboriginal leaders to include symbols of reconciliation in the opening ceremony. Cathy Freeman, an indigenous Australian who had refused calls to boycott the games, lit the Olympic flame to open the games. She then went on to win the 400-meter race, becoming a symbol of both the achievements of Aborigines and acceptance of indigenous people into mainstream Australian society. During the games, protests were fragmented and turnout was much lower than expected.

# by the numbers

### 1.5 MILLION:

Estimated number of people to have been relocated from their homes in Beijing in the last eight years to make room for Olympic facilities and "beautification" projects. ("One World, Whose Dream? Housing Rights Violations and the Beijing Olympic Games," *cohre.org*)

### 30,000:

Number of surveillance cameras, some with microphones, that have been installed throughtout Beijing. Capable of filming passers-by and recording conversations, they are designed to help the authorities identify suspicious behavior and locate suspects. (*rsf.org*)

### 20,000:

Approximate number of journalists and technicians at the Olympics who will face Internet censorship when reporting from China. Websites considered "politically sensitive" will be blocked. Reporters Without Borders has issued a guide on how to use proxy servers to navigate around China's censorship (*rsf.org*)

### 3:

Number of U.S. companies — IBM, Honeywell and General Electric — who have been exposed supplying integrated surveillance systems to China. Three U.S. cities — New York, Chicago and Washington, D.C. — are experimenting with similar technology. ("China's All-Seeing Eye." By Naomi Klein, *Rolling Stone*)

### \$58-78 MILLION:

Estimated amount the 12 global partner Olympic sponsors have paid for a four-year deal. These include Coca-cola, Visa, McDonalds, General Electric and Johnson & Johnson. (*guardian.co.uk*)

### None Reported:

Number of protests held demanding the United States be banned from the 2008 Olympics due to its illegal occupation of Iraq.

# quotable

" I just don't see how you can separate the Olympics from politics. The Olympics is part of the world, period. "

—DAVID WALLECHINSKY, Olympic expert and author of *The Complete Book of the Olympics*

" We must stay, for freedom's sake. ... Some of my friends have already been arrested while others have been expelled from the capital. We are not wanted for any crime and we are not terrorists. The police are using archaic methods. "

—ZHANG ZUXIAN, a Beijing intellectual, who is one of many dissidents who have received threats by the Chinese government to leave the city during the Olympics

# resources

**Olympic Watch:**  
*Olympicwatch.org*

**Reporters Without Borders:**  
*Rsf.org*

**Edge of Sports (blog):**  
*Edgeofsports.com*



LEO GARCIA



# INVINCIBLE MEN CRUSH U.S. ANXIETIES

Every summer, Hollywood lights up the screen with the clash of heroes and villains. But this year, it seems there is a strange urgency. It was more than simple excitement at well-made movies — it felt like Hollywood was battling not our boredom, but our anxiety. For the past few years we’ve heard people suggesting that America’s time as the only superpower is coming to a close. Is that what’s behind these blockbusters? Do we want to be the sole global superhero again?

Out national mythology, in the words of former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, is that we are “the indispensable nation.” But as our reasons for invading Iraq stand as naked lies, as India and China rise and Iran taunts us, we look more and more dispensable.

Against this troubling backdrop of U.S. decline, superhero movies, in the words of Freud, “split the ego.” In the theater, we take the hero’s journey and separate our troubled American identity into a good and bad one. The hero stands in for our ideal self, purified of excesses like greed or militarism, which we isolate in the villain. Hero and villain battle in the streets, tearing up streetlights, flipping over tractors. Of course, the hero wins

and we leave the theater cleansed through an act of cinematic catharsis.

We see Iron Man build an armor of righteousness, the Hulk chased to the edge of his rage-triggered strength and Batman pursue a gothic justice. Watching the heroes smash flashy cars and fly between skyscrapers, one feels the movies satisfy a subliminal need. They justified U.S. violence with morality and re-affirmed our innocence.

They do this because, long before he is a hero on the screen, he is us. Each of the summer’s champions begins as a muddled American. Tony Stark is a champagne-gulping, amoral playboy, Bruce Banner a mousy government technocrat and Bruce Wayne a clueless child. Each hero’s journey opens with a trauma that destroys him. Stark is captured and mortally wounded by Islamic warlords. Banner is soaked by gamma waves from his laboratory. Wayne sees his parents shot



AKIKO KATO

while they leave the opera. Each hero’s wound makes it impossible for him to be who he was before.

Over that wound, the hero pulls down the mask like a bandage of anonymity. His goodness is guar-

anteed by his suffering, which exposes him to the suffering of others. In their name, he wears an armored suit or impenetrable gamma-rage. So Stark becomes Iron Man and blasts Islamic warlords in order to free helpless Arab women and children. Banner, whose strength is triggered by victimization can, even as the Hulk, shield his ex-fiancé from the fiery explosions. And Batman guards the terrified people of Gotham against a multinational criminal underground anchored by a corrupt Chinese businessman.

In these movies it’s easy to see our anxiety about the Iraq War, Asian economic competition and gender roles being exorcised. More important, our myths teach us that our violence is justified by our pain. Is it any wonder that in the 2004 State of Union address, President Bush declared, “America will never seek a permission slip to defend the security of our country?” Our

foreign policy reflects the vigilante justice we see in our movies.

Yet a subversive insight threads through these films. The dramatic friction at their core is not external threats, but the monster in the mirror. The final leg of the hero’s journey is when he turns to face the enemy within. Iron Man’s climatic battle is not with Islamic warlords; instead he tumbles through the street with his business partner Stane. The Hulk’s ultimate enemy is not the U.S. military, but rather a mercenary soldier who overdoses on gamma rays in a quest for glory. Batman’s nemesis is not the multinational criminal class, but the Joker, an American anarchist clown.

Hidden inside each movie is a perverse warning against our own excess. We see in the moral pyrotechnics an unintended lesson: We are our own enemy. I wonder, as the American audience learns to “re-split the ego” and our villainous side is killed or captured, in what form will it return?

—NICHOLAS POWERS AND  
LESLEY PHILIP

## The Revolution of Everyday Life

*Expect Resistance: A Field Manual*  
BY CRIMETHINC. N©!  
CRIMETHINC. EX-WORKERS’  
COLLECTIVE, 2008

In 1967, the year before riots and unrest brought France to the edge of revolution, Raoul Vaneigem, a key member of the Paris-based Situationist International, wrote: “People who talk about revolution and class struggle without referring explicitly to everyday life, without understanding what is subversive about love and what is positive in the refusal of constraints, such people have corpses in their mouths.”

Forty years later, no one can accuse the CrimethInc. Collective of having corpses in their mouths. Their latest book, *Expect Resistance*, is a passionate call for readers to see revolution as a daily event, rather than as an abstract idea that may never be realized.

*Expect Resistance* follows *Recipes for Disaster: An Anarchist Cookbook* and *Days of Love, Nights of War* in developing the

crimethink philosophy of liberated living and fiery opposition to capitalism and injustice. Like CrimethInc.’s others works, *Expect Resistance* is beautifully presented, illustrated with everything from drawings of a post-apocalyptic world, to fake *New York Times* covers to actual photographs of fence-smashing demonstrations. The self-described “decentralized anarchist collective” lists no author names on its publications to give credibility to the idea of collective action.

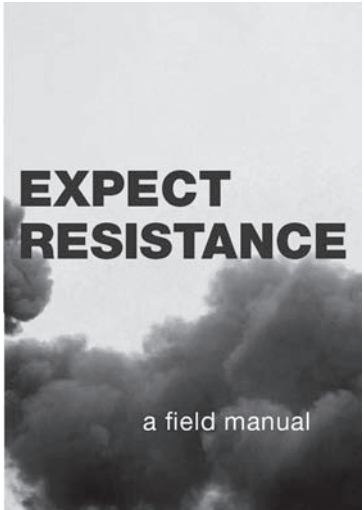
One half of *Expect Resistance*, printed in red ink, is a fictional narrative that follows Marshall, Pablo and Samia as they leave their conventional lives and jobs to pursue a life of radical activism. The three meet during an occupation of a university, protesting both sweatshop labor and the working conditions of low-paid university workers. They go on to fall in and out of love and confront capitalism and injustice head-on.

These fictional episodes alternate with chapters printed in black ink covering crimethink theory. While critics may deride the CrimethInc.

model as “lifestyle anarchism” (as opposed to the more politically rigorous “social anarchism”), these theoretical sections successfully bridge the gap between the personal and the political. Everything from different models of consensus-making to the ethics of adultery is covered here in engaging and provocative prose. What gives the book its particular force is the correlation between the fictional and theoretical sections. A chapter on “Crowd Dynamics and the Mass Psychology of Possibility” is followed by a description of a “Reclaim the Streets”-style protest where Pablo and other anti-sweatshop campaigners take over a busy road in the face of police opposition. By intertwining theory with fiction, radical political ideas become tools for immediate use.

*Expect Resistance* delves into the complexities, consequences and pitfalls of radical activism in a way that other celebratory books about the anti-capitalist movement (such as the otherwise excellent *Globalize Liberation*, edited by David Solnit) have shied away from. After the success and euphoria of the

university occupation, the group of friends and allies that spawned it fall apart in an all too predictable mess of in-fighting and factionalism. In one of the book’s strongest theoretical sections, “Failure,” this recognition of imperfection is presented as a necessary and even inspiring step: “True failure, tragic and heartbreaking as it is, is proof that you’ve reached beyond yourself, that you are pushing at your own limits and the limits of the



world.” Reaching for the impossible and failing becomes the perfect antidote to a culture that values the petty successes of money and careerism.

In the end, CrimethInc. tells us that it is possible to win. The “Afterward” section presents both a manifesto for Maximum Ultraism, where ultraists “wage a life-and-death war against consensus reality” (injustice that only exists with the consent of the majority) and a portrait of a post-capitalist world where grocery stores are replaced with gardens and cough syrup with licorice root. Even if none of this happens, the book declares, “we will have the adventure of our lives.” *Expect Resistance* presents an ideal reminder for jaded activists that a life of opposition does not have to be a life of frustration. And while not every reader will have the luxury or opportunity to become a full-time revolutionary like Pablo, Marshall and Samia, it also reminds us that the fight for meaningful change begins on the battlefield of everyday life.

—HARRY THORNE



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# Eyes of Hope

*Possibilities: Essays on Hierarchy, Rebellion and Desire*  
By DAVID GRAEBER  
AK PRESS, 2007

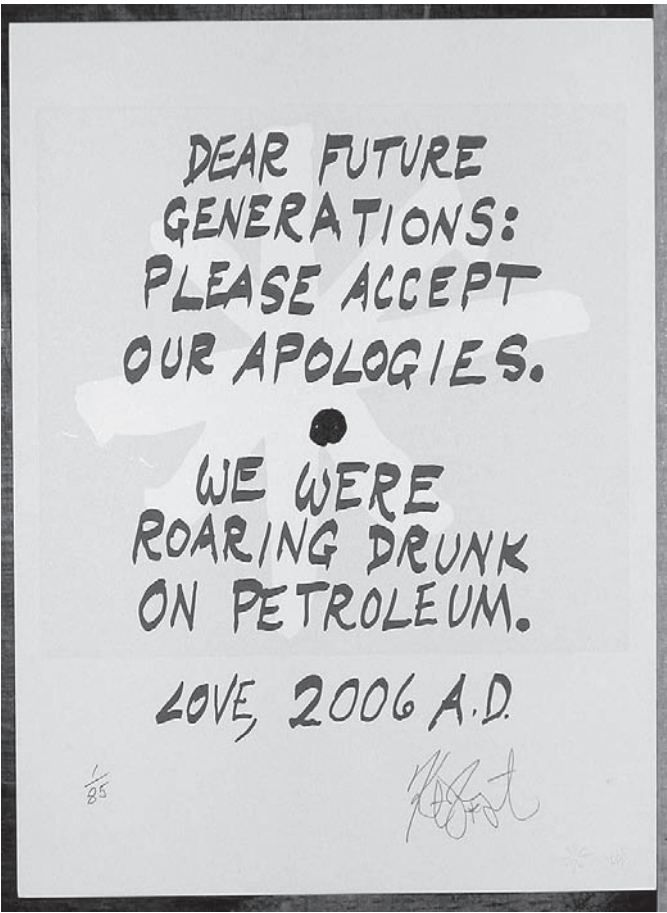
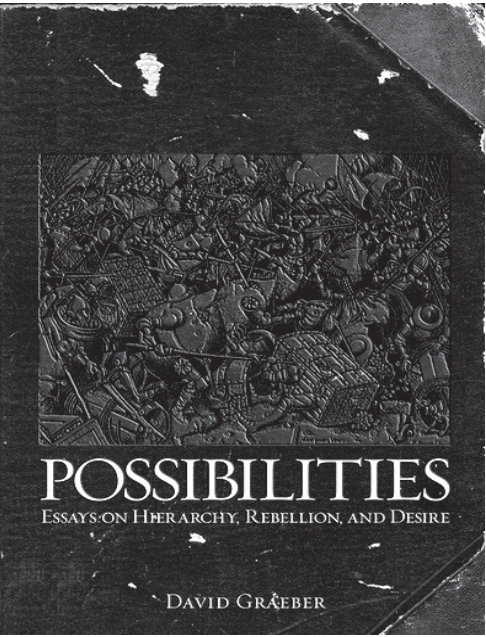
David Graeber is one of the foremost intellectuals in the global justice movement, keeping one foot in the library and the other in the streets. While working as an anthropologist at Yale University, he was a spokesman for the Direct Action Network in New York. His latest book, *Possibilities*, reflects this dual role, attempting to critically reflect on the nature of the society we live in, by using the tools of anthropology and writing for an activist audience.

Graeber’s intellectual project here can be taken as a response to Marx’s call for “a ruthless critique of everything existing.” Ranging freely over a wide physical and intellectual terrain, the essays in *Possibilities* take us from a study of a village in Madagascar where the state government holds no sway over everyday life, to an argument suggesting capitalism is a form of slavery, to a reflection on the building of giant puppets and about police power in United States. A relatively typical essay proceeds from a discussion of the creation of gods in West Africa to an analysis of the social contract and Marx’s conception of the commodity, using this to explore how new social relations might be born. In his meandering way, Graeber attempts to destroy commonplace categories for understanding the world, hoping to open our eyes to the actual possibilities of how the world could be organized — without bosses or the state. Instead of building a comprehensive theory of everything — or anything — he is content to spark reflection and questioning, tossing off provocations and insights.

*Possibilities* is both a follow-up to, and fulfillment of, Graeber’s *Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology*, in which he argued that the tools of anthropology have the potential to help us understand what kind of other world is possible. Inspired by a movement devoted to tearing down walls, he attempts to take concepts nurtured by radicals in the academy to those outside of the “academic ghetto,” even choosing to publish with an anarchist press (AK Press).

Academics are likely to find both the argumentation and citation too loose for their liking — despite eight of the 12 essays having previously appeared in academic journals or books. Activists are likely to find Graeber’s tack too theoretical and his discussions of academic literature too removed from their concerns. Nonetheless, *Possibilities* is a fascinating attempt at sparking dialogue across the academic-activist divide.

—MATT WASSERMAN



## Vonnegut’s Final Insights

*Armageddon in Retrospect*  
By KURT VONNEGUT  
G.P. PUTNAM’S SONS, 2008

Released a year after Kurt Vonnegut’s death April 11, 2007, *Armageddon in Retrospect* is a collection of previously unpublished non-fiction and short stories on the theme of war and peace. Mostly written before the 1967 publication of his breakthrough novel *Slaughterhouse Five*, *Armageddon* has a hard time matching Vonnegut’s strident parting shot in 2006, *Man Without A Country*, whose direct authorial voice bore witness to the insanity of murdering each other and our planet.

A change had come to Vonnegut in the last years of his life. As Vonnegut’s son Mark writes in his introduction to *Armageddon*, “[The Iraq war] broke his heart. ... It wasn’t until the Iraq war and the end of his life that he became sincerely gloomy.”

This later Vonnegut is most present in the three non-fiction pieces and his artwork in *Armageddon*. The first piece is a speech completed weeks before his death to inaugurate the Year of Kurt Vonnegut in Indiana. (His son Mark subsequently delivered it.) It is a condensed version of *A Man Without A Country*, effortless insight gift-wrapped in humor. “If anyone here should wind up in a gurney in a lethal-injection facility,” he wrote, “... your last words should be: ‘This will certainly teach me a lesson.’”

This tragicomic streak that is so definitively Vonnegut is widely attributed to his experiences as a prisoner-of-war (POW) during the saturation fire-bombing of Dresden in World War II. He was given the task of pulling the corpses of women and children from the wreckage. Speaking to the *Indy Star*, Mark said he thought his father never got over his war experience. *Armageddon* probably comes closest to giving us the terrible truth of these experiences.

*Slaughterhouse Five* may have dealt with Dresden, but *Armageddon* describes a more brutal reality. *Armageddon* reproduces a letter Vonnegut wrote to his father after being released from being a POW. The experiences of delousing showers, as in *Slaughterhouse Five*, are related, but departing from the 1967 version: “Many men died from shock in the showers after days of starvation, thirst and exposure. But I didn’t.”

The final phrase “but I didn’t” is repeated throughout the letter every time Vonnegut witnesses death — reminiscent of the “so it goes” from *Slaughterhouse Five*. Although in the letter it reads less like a mantra, and more like a sigh. In *Wailing Shall Be in All Streets*, a biographical account and assessment of the Dresden bombing, the angrier Vonnegut re-emerges. “The ‘Get Tough America’ policy, the spirit of revenge, the approbation of all destruction and killing, has earned us a name for obscene

© Kurt Vonnegut and Origami Express.  
IMAGES COURTESY OF VONNEGUT.COM

brutality,” he wrote.

After this, the collection loses some of its visceral edge but none of its insight. The majority of the fiction afterwards was most likely taken from the period between the end of World War II and the publication of *Slaughterhouse Five*, when Vonnegut described himself as a hack. The Lilly Library at the University of Indiana holds rejection letters to many of the stories in *Armageddon*, and one from 1954 for *Unicorn Trap* is revealing. The story, the letter reads, is “tainted with genius, but of the madder kind,” and is brimming with too many ideas for the staid world of magazine publishing.

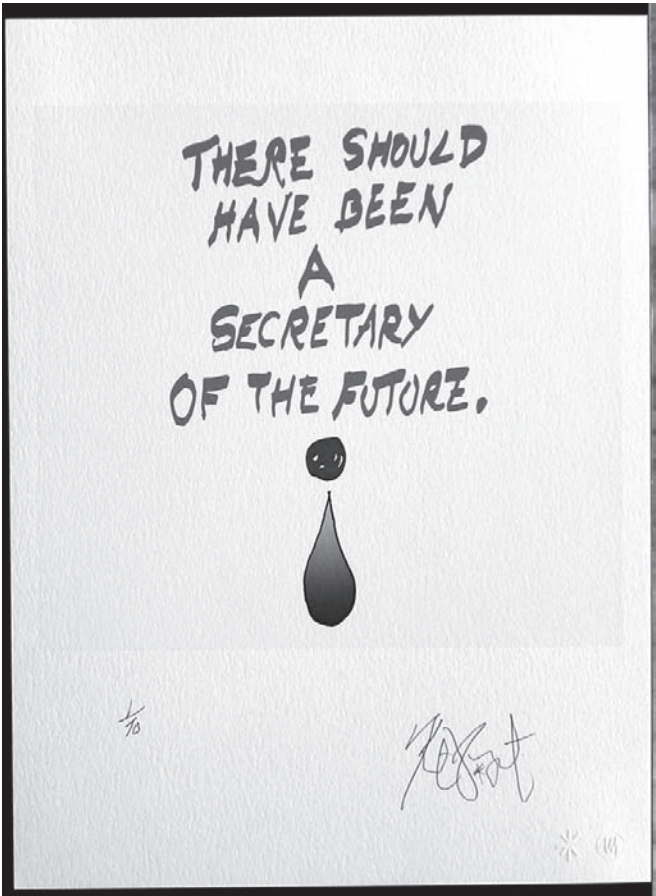
But this is the edifying aspect of these stories. The main plots themselves hold truth: the human impulse to war (*Great Day*); the allure of war for the young (*Happy Birthday, 1951*); the timeless nature of the powerful and powerless (*The Unicorn Trap*); the similarity of occupying armies (*The Commandant’s Desk*); technology releasing the Devil (*Armageddon in Retrospect*); but the tales are spun with acute observations throughout.

Take *Unknown Soldier*, which deals with the media furor around the first child born in the third millennium of the Christian era. This sobering piece, written later (a rejection letter from *Cosmopolitan*, dated 1991, exists in the Lilly Library’s manuscript collection), pillories the whole endeavor. Vonnegut poignantly writes, “It seems to me now that she was like an unknown soldier in a war memorial, a little bit of flesh and bone and hair which was extolled to the point of lunacy.”

It is these short, pithy, *bon mots* that gave Vonnegut his shine throughout his writing career and his talents are on luminous display here. Even after he focused on his art (the sketches in *Armageddon* deserve a separate review altogether), the wisdom kept flowing as in *Confetti* #46: “In the U.S.A. it’s winners vs. losers and the fix is on.”

*Armageddon* can be recommended to all who felt that Vonnegut articulated their frustrations with the world, and to those who haven’t, this is an entertaining gateway book to the rest of his work.

—JONATHAN SHANNON







# The Macktivist

BY R. ALVAREZ

Dear Macktivist,  
I really dig the “getting caught” thrills of having sex in public, but I don’t know what book the law will throw at me if I am caught. I already have an arrest on my record from the Republican National Convention so I want to be informed as to the laws surrounding public sex.

—TWO STRIKES FROM BED-STUY

Hi TSFBD,  
Glad you’re out there doing God’s kinky work in the bushes. I’d like to briefly note that finding one’s sexual rights online is a convoluted journey full of erection-killing mugshots and limp, dead links, so cheers for a good challenge! The Woodhull Freedom Foundation and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force are overdue on formulating the Sex Laws Database, designed to help with such a question. Until then, the reproachful state-controlled Public Law Database is all we plebs get (in New York: public.leginfo.state.ny.us).

What you’re asking about is a sex offense, as opposed to sexual misconduct (which involves minors, dead people and animals — lord have mercy if they catch you with an underage mink stole). A sex offense may be considered obscenity in the second or third degree or an A-E non-violent felony. More charges can be piled on based on the arresting cop’s disposition, such as a sodomy charge (the Supreme Court’s 2003 ruling overturning a Texas sodomy law only applies to consenting adults in private). It’s not likely, but if the state is in a cruel mood, they can have you register with the National Sex Offender Registry.

A sentence on a clean record can run anywhere from zero to 30 days in the clink and will generally carry a fine of \$250 to \$500. If you want to keep track of your state’s terrifying sex offender laws, do a search on the state assembly’s webpage for “sex” (assembly.state.ny.us in New York). The U.S. Department of Justice links the act of public sex to drug use, assault and robbery, and homosexuality, so if you qualify in any of these categories, it’s possible that the police will come down even harder on you. It makes a difference whether your Republican Nation-

al Convention arrest was violent or non-violent, so I can’t say for sure what you could get slapped with — but I do think you now need to err on the side of caution.

The safest option for you is to simulate getting caught; the next-best option is to cut down your chances of being caught using the suggestions below. TSFBD, you seem like an intelligent pervert, so I hope you agree that a little pre-planned caution can still feel spontaneous and sexy.

Before anything else, I want you to let your partner know that getting caught is your m.o. so they know what they’re signing up for — besides, they may have better ideas than me on how to push your big red button.

1. Consider who will be catching you. When choosing a location, consider that it’s better to be caught by someone slow-moving, like an aging church deacon or a store mannequin; their cop-dialing reflex is slower than most. If suspension of reality is something that’s in your sexual superhero toolbelt (and man, do I think this is the best option for you) have a (possibly costumed) friend “stumble upon you.”

2. Choose a spot where getting caught is likely and flight is easy. For example, don’t get sighted in the middle of a deserted golf course, but rather in the front seat of your car in an Ikea parking lot.

3. Set up a look out. Have a nearby look-out text message you if someone’s coming. Repay them by texting to let them know you’re coming.

4. Reduce the charges and chances. If you still need to do it without a safety net, don’t philander drunk, high, with a stolen purse in your lap or with a dead person; this will only enrage the police more. Also, don’t do it near the end of the month when cops have quotas to fill.

5. Get seen, not caught. Consider whether the rush you’re after is the danger of being caught or the enjoyment of being seen. If the latter rings true, work on your indoor tan after researching a friendly local sex party. And enjoy yourself.

Email your sex-related questions to [sex@indypendent.org](mailto:sex@indypendent.org).



**TOMPKINS SQUARE REMEMBERS** : A crowd dances as the band Casa de Chihuahua plays bluegrass music at an Aug. 2 concert that commemorated the 20th anniversary of the Tompkins Square Park riots. On Aug. 6, 1988, police seeking to enforce a curfew against an encampment of homeless people living in the park launched an indiscriminate attack against the surrounding neighborhood as they battled through the night with an ad-hoc coalition of activists, punks, Yuppies and squatters opposed to the gentrification that was already starting to change the neighborhood. An annual concert is held in early August to mark the anniversary of the riot and to protest continued police brutality in the neighborhood. PHOTO: JAMIE LEHANE

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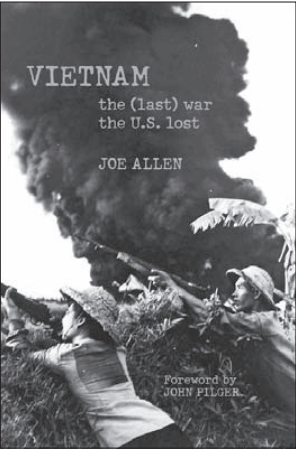
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